

USACHPPM
HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE

10 December 2004

The HIO Update provides information regarding global medical and veterinary issues of interest to the United States (US) Army. The update does not attempt to analyze the information as to its strategic or tactical impact on the US Army and should not be regarded as a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence products are available from the [Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Center](#). The information in the HIO Update should provide an increased awareness of current and emerging health-related issues.

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HOT TOPICS

Bird-Flu Challenge

13 December issue - Newsweek reported that scientists have designed a vaccine for the H5N1 [avian flu](#) virus using a new technique called reverse genetics, which allowed them to assemble the vaccine, from its genetic constituents in only a few months. They isolated H5N1's "surface proteins" - knoblike structures that the immune system uses to identify an invader—and attached them to a benign virus that could be administered to people. The resulting vaccine has worked on animals, and the U.S. government has awarded contracts to Chiron and Aventis to produce enough vaccine to start human clinical trials in the new year. [View Article](#)

Certain Immune Genes Key in Fighting HIV

8 December – Forbes reported that scientists have identified human immune system genes that may play an important role in fighting [HIV](#). This discovery may help researchers find ways to counter HIV's use of rapid mutation to foil anti-HIV vaccines. The study also outlines the interplay between HIV and human evolution, since people with the protective versions of these immune genes are more likely to survive HIV infection and pass those genes along to their children. "This study identifies the genetic battleground where the struggle between HIV and the human immune response occurs," principal investigator Dr. Philip Goulder, of the Partners AIDS Research Center at Massachusetts General Hospital, said in a prepared statement. [View Article](#)

Dogs with Paralyzed Hind Legs Walk Again with Lab Injection

5 December – The Chicago Sun-Times reported that dogs with [paralyzed](#) hind legs walked again after getting a shot of polyethylene glycol that helped repair nerve cells in their damaged spinal cords. The treatment only worked on dogs given the injections within about three days of their injury. In the study, 19 paraplegic dogs were injected with polyethylene glycol, or PEG, a nontoxic liquid polymer composed of the same type of molecules found in antifreeze. Within eight weeks, 13 of the 19 canines, about 68 percent, were able to walk, some almost as well as before their injury. The dogs were injected with PEG after their owners brought them to the researchers' labs and after standard surgery and steroids to reduce inflammation. Among a group of 24 dogs that received just the standard surgery and rehabilitation therapies, only about 25 percent regained the same level of

mobility, feeling and bodily functions, with about 62 percent remaining paraplegic. Researchers who led the project hope the approach can soon be tried in people. [View Article](#)

Fingertip Test Catches Early Signs of Heart Disease

7 December – Forbes reported that a simple test of fingertip blood vessels may help identify people with the earliest stages of atherosclerosis. "[Atherosclerosis](#) tends to affect all of the blood vessels in the body, and is not just limited to the arteries of the heart. We expected patients with an abnormal result in the fingertip test to also have disease starting in their coronary arteries. We found a strong correlation, and that the fingertip test was very sensitive in identifying patients with early heart disease," study leader Dr. Amir Lerman, a Mayo Clinic cardiologist, stated. The researchers compared the results of the noninvasive fingertip probe and invasive catheterization in detecting dysfunction in endothelial cells that line blood vessels. Endothelial dysfunction indicates the early stages of atherosclerosis and heart disease. "In this group of patients with chest pain, the noninvasive test was very sensitive in identifying those with early heart disease," Lerman said. "The next step is to extend the research to broader populations of patients who may not yet have symptoms. [View Article](#)

Flu Pandemic Could Wreck Global Ecosystem, Warns Flu Expert

4 December – The Star Online reported that a medical expert has warned that the next [flu](#) pandemic could wreck the global ecosystem. Microbiologist Kennedy Shortridge, an honorary professor at both the University of Hong Kong and the University of Auckland in Australia, said that he feared such a pandemic could destroy the global ecosystem in addition to causing human deaths. "If this virus gets into bird life beyond poultry, we could wreck the global ecosystem and we could be on the verge of an 'ecocide'," Shortridge, who helped Hong Kong fight a 1997 bird flu outbreak that crossed over to humans and killed six people, said. Meanwhile, Hong Kong and mainland researchers said they have developed a new and quicker diagnostic test for the bird flu virus, which could detect whether someone is infected by the virus within two hours. The new diagnostic test for the H5N1 bird flu virus has a 90 percent accuracy rate and is much quicker in yielding results than current tests, which take three to five days. [View Article](#)

Genetically Modified Malaria Parasite 'Could Lead to Vaccine'

7 December – All Africa reported that a live [malaria](#) parasite could one day be used as a vaccine to protect people from the disease. By modifying the genes of a form of the parasite that causes malaria in rodents, the researchers were able to prevent it from moving from the rats' liver to their blood stream. Once in the blood stream, the parasite normally enters red blood cells, causing symptoms of disease. It is also from there that it can be transmitted to others, through a new mosquito bite. The researchers were able to trap the parasite in the liver by 'knocking out' one of the parasite's genes that earlier research had suggested was important at the infective stage of the parasite's life cycle. The deletion of a single gene could be enough to create a form of the parasite that is unable to affect human health. Such a weakened parasite could be used as a vaccine by giving the immune system a window of opportunity to develop the ability to recognize and repel future infections of normal malaria parasites before they can pose threats to health. [View Article](#)

Green Leafy Vegetables May Help Prevent Cataracts

6 December – Health and Age reported that a study suggests that certain antioxidants found in spinach and greens seem to protect against [cataract](#). Around 20 million people in the USA suffer from cataract - a clouding of the eye lens that is linked to oxidative stress. This occurs with age as the lens is exposed to pollution and ultraviolet radiation. Cataract can lead to visual loss, although it can

be treated by replacing the clouded lens. A team at Ohio State University now reveals that lutein and zeaxanthin, two antioxidants found in green leafy vegetables, can protect cataract. They exposed eye lens cells to ultraviolet after treatment with either antioxidant or vitamin E. All the antioxidants could protect from the radiation-linked damage that might cause cataract, but lutein and zeaxanthin were better at this than vitamin E. [View Article](#)

Lead Exposure Link to Cataracts

8 December – BCC News reported that accumulated [lead exposure](#) may increase the risk of developing a [cataract](#). Scientists found people with the highest level of lead in their bones were most likely to develop a cataract. Despite measures to cut lead pollution, most adults have substantial levels in their bodies. The researchers investigated whether there was an association between the development of cataracts and lead levels in two bones - the tibia (shin bone) and the patella (kneecap). The researchers found that men with the highest tibia lead level were 2.7 times more likely to develop a cataract than those who recorded the lowest level of lead in this bone. When other factors, such as smoking and diabetes were taken into consideration, the risk rose to 3.2 times that of those exposed to the lowest lead levels. [View Article](#)

Researchers Develop Quick Bird Flu Test

8 December – Newsday reported that researchers said Wednesday they have developed a new test that can detect [bird flu](#) in humans within hours, compared with up to a week or more for older versions. Early diagnosis is crucial to controlling bird flu outbreaks, and the new test makes that possible by producing results in one or two hours. The old tests take so long that infected people may be dead before results are available, said Guan Yi, a Hong Kong-based researcher who worked on the new version. He said the pricing for the new test hasn't been decided, but that it would be "much cheaper" than older ones. The new diagnostic kits are straightforward enough to be used by non-specialists on the scene of an outbreak, the statement said. [View Article](#)

SARS Vaccine Linked to Liver Damage in Ferret Study

6 December - CIDRAP News reported that researchers in Canada found hepatitis in ferrets after injecting the animals with an experimental vaccine for [SARS](#) (severe acute respiratory syndrome) and are urging caution as other investigators develop and test SARS vaccines. Three ferrets were injected with the rMVA-S vaccine, three with parental MVA, and three with saline solution. They received booster immunizations 2 weeks later. Then the ferrets were exposed intranasally to the SARS virus. On the plus side, immunization with rMVA-S induced a rapid immune response following exposure to the virus. The ferrets displayed no clinical signs of illness, but viral RNA was found in pharyngeal swabs and blood samples taken from all the ferrets. But researchers unexpectedly discovered that the ferrets had severe hepatitis. Only mild hepatitis was found in the ferrets injected with parental MVA or saline. [View Article](#)

Shampoo 'Risk to Unborn Babies'

6 December – BBC News reported that a chemical found in shampoo and hand lotions may damage the developing nervous system. A U.S. study found [methyisothiazolinone](#) (MIT) can affect the growth of parts of developing nerve cells which help them communicate with their neighbors. The work was carried out in rats, but researchers are concerned about the potential effect on human fetuses. Researcher Dr. Elias Aizenman of the University of Pittsburgh said: "While more research is needed to determine what effect MIT would have in rodent models, both at the cellular level and to a developing nervous system, our results thus far suggest there is a potential that everyday exposure to

the chemical could also be harmful to humans." I would be particularly concerned about occupational exposure in pregnant women and the possibility of risk to the fetus." [View Article](#)

Smoking Makes Your IQ Go Down

9 December – Medical News Today reported that according to scientists at Aberdeen University, Scotland, [smoking](#) will gradually lower your IQ. Researchers first tested the IQs of 465 volunteers in 1947, they were all aged 11. They were all IQ tested again in 2000-2002 when they had reached the age of 64. About half of them were smokers, while the other half were not. The researchers found that the smokers got lower results than the non-smokers. The scientist took into account such factors as education, job descriptions and alcohol intake. They found that smoking had lowered people's IQs by nearly 1%. [View Article](#)

"Thinking Cap" Controls Computer in New Experiment

6 December – Reuters reported that four people were able to control a computer using their thoughts and an electrode-studded "thinking cap". Researchers said their set-up could someday be adapted to help disabled people operate a motorized wheelchair or artificial limb. Previous experiments have allowed a monkey to control a computer with its thoughts; electrodes were implanted into the animal's brain. This experiment required no surgery and no implants. "The results show that people can learn to use scalp-recorded electroencephalogram rhythms to control rapid and accurate movement of a cursor in two dimensions," Jonathan Wolpaw and Dennis McFarland of the New York State Department of Health and State University of New York in Albany wrote. [View Article](#)

Weight Loss and Sleep

7 December – The Chicago Sun-Times reported that the optimal amount of sleep for [weight control](#) was 7.7 hours. In addition to changing appetite hormones, cutting back on sleep gives people more time to overeat. But those who slept more than 7.7 hours also had higher body mass indexes. One possible reason, researchers wrote, is that long sleepers had less time to exercise. Twelve young men who slept only four hours a night for two nights had a 28 percent increase in ghrelin and 18 percent decrease in leptin. Moreover, they reported a 24 percent increase in appetite, and tended to crave junk food such as candy, cookies and chips. The researchers wrote that during the past 50 years, the amount of time Americans sleep each night has decreased by one to two hours. "During the same time period, the incidence of obesity has nearly doubled," researchers wrote. "Additional studies should examine the possible role of chronic sleep curtailment as a previously unrecognized risk factor for obesity." [View Article](#)

WHO Presses Governments, Fearing Bird Flu Pandemic

9 December – Reuters reported that The World Health Organization is stepping up efforts to ensure governments around the globe are ready to fight a [flu](#) pandemic. Health officials fear the H5N1 strain of bird flu could eventually mutate into a lethal new virus that will spread rapidly among humans. The United Nations health agency, which sees a potential death toll of two million to seven million as a "best case scenario" for an outbreak, wants to tighten international cooperation and speed governmental battle plans. "We have been stepping up our level of preparedness in the last month. Our level of concern is increasing," Dr Klaus Stohr, head of the WHO's global influenza program, told Reuters. "It would not be unexpected that the number of avian flu cases will increase with the onset of winter and we have to get our act together," Stohr said. International health officials have warned for years that a flu pandemic is overdue, because the last one, which killed between one million and four million, occurred back in 1968. [View Article](#)

Focus on Epidemiology

Trends in Motorcycle Fatalities Associated with Alcohol-Impaired Driving

3 December – MMWR reported that [motorcycles](#) are the most dangerous type of motor vehicle to drive. These vehicles are involved in fatal crashes at a rate of 35.0 per 100 million miles of travel, compared with a rate of 1.7 per 100 million miles of travel for passenger cars. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has reported increasing numbers of motorcycle deaths associated with alcohol-impaired driving in recent years, especially among persons aged ≥ 40 years. To determine trends by age group in motorcycle fatalities overall and in those involving alcohol impairment, CDC analyzed data from the NHTSA Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) for 1983, 1993, and 2003. During 1983–2003, the overall prevalence of elevated blood alcohol concentrations (BACs) among motorcycle drivers who died in crashes declined; however, the peak rate of death among alcohol-impaired motorcycle drivers shifted from those aged 20–24 years to those aged 40–44 years. Strong enforcement of existing BAC laws, together with other public health interventions aimed at motorcyclists, might reduce the crash mortality rate, especially among older drivers. [View Report](#)

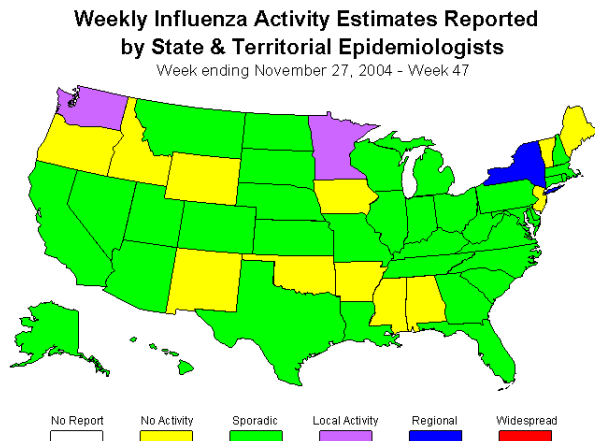
DoD-GEIS: Acinetobacter Infections

The 19 November MMWR article, *Acinetobacter baumannii* Infections Among Patients at Military Medical Facilities Treating Injured U.S. Service Members, 2002–2004, describes an increasing number of *A. baumannii* bloodstream infections in patients at military medical facilities (MTFs) in which service members injured in the Iraq/Kuwait region during OIF and Afghanistan during OEF were treated. According to the article, the number of these infections and their resistance to multiple antimicrobial agents underscore the importance of infection control during treatment in combat and health-care settings and the need to develop new antimicrobial drugs to treat these infections. Clinicians treating patients who have recently been hospitalized (especially in ICUs) at MTFs described in this report should be aware of the potential for colonization and infection with *A. baumannii*. Additional information on *A. baumannii* is available from [CDC](#). Clinical management and wound-care guidelines have been developed to help prevent and mitigate *A. baumannii* infections in MTFs. Clinicians with specific questions about *A. baumannii* among US servicemembers should contact the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (telephone 800-222-9698). From 1 Jan 02 – 31 Aug 04, 102 patients were identified with blood cultures that grew *A. baumannii* at MTFs treating service members injured in Afghanistan and the Iraq/Kuwait region. *A. baumannii* are a species of gram-negative bacteria commonly found in water and soil. In civilian hospitals during 1963–2003, *A. baumannii* became a cause of nosocomial infections. Treatment can be difficult because the organism has both intrinsic resistance to certain antimicrobial agents and acquired resistance to many others. In health-care settings, colonized and infected patients are often the sources of *A. baumannii* infections. The ability of the organism to survive for prolonged periods on environmental surfaces also has contributed to protracted outbreaks in these settings. MMWR's editor notes that in a recent national survey of hospital laboratories, *A. baumannii* infections accounted for 1.3% of health-care-associated bloodstream infections. The sources that led to the infections described in this report are still under investigation. Information on Influenza (avian and human) including the DoD Global Influenza Program, WNV, Leishmaniasis and severe respiratory syndromes, including SARS, is available on the [DoD-GEIS website](#).

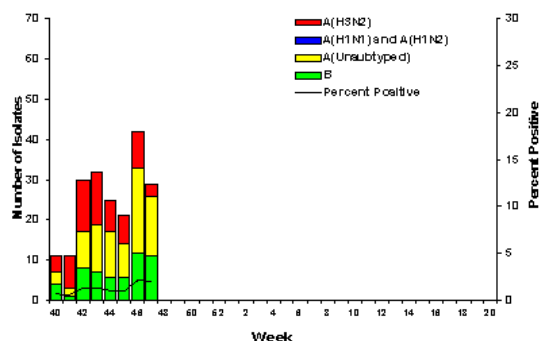
Influenza Update

CDC Weekly Influenza Report for Week Ending 27 November – Week 47

During week 47 (November 21-27, 2004)*, influenza activity overall was low in the United States. Twenty-nine (2.1%) specimens tested by U.S. World Health Organization (WHO) and National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System (NREVSS) collaborating laboratories were positive for influenza. The proportion of patient visits to sentinel providers for influenza-like illness (ILI) and the proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza were below national baseline values. One state reported regional influenza activity and two states reported local activity. Thirty-five states, the District of Columbia, and New York City reported sporadic influenza activity and 12 states reported no influenza activity.



U.S. WHO/NREVSS Collaborating Laboratories Summary, 2004-05



European Influenza Surveillance Scheme Report for Week Ending 28 November - Week 48

The number of countries reporting sporadic cases of influenza activity has increased slightly in week 48/2004, although the level of influenza activity in Europe remains low (at baseline levels). Since the start of this season, there has been a steady increase in the total number of laboratory confirmed cases of influenza, which are mainly influenza A. The incidence of RSV (a viral infection with clinical symptoms that are similar to influenza-like illness) detections continues to increase.

Other timely information can be found in:

The current issue of the Army Medical Surveillance Activity's [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)
This week's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

USCENTCOM

Kenya: Warning Issued on Cholera Outbreak

6 December - AllAfrica.com reported that a countrywide [cholera](#) alert has been issued for Kenya. Medical services director James Nyikal confirmed yesterday that he had written to all eight provincial medical officers and their 71 district counterparts, telling them to be on high alert. Dr. Nyikal said that the disease has killed three people since November 22, when it was first detected, while 153 cases had been treated. Dr Nyikal led top Ministry of Health officials in assessing the situation on a stretch on Nairobi-Mombasa highway that has been hit by the disease. Some 68 out of 162 hotels and restaurants inspected had been closed for failing to meet minimum health standards. Hotel workers were also examined. Out of the 82 examined, 18 were banned from handling food. [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

Cholera in Nigeria

3 December – The WHO has received reports from the Federal Ministry of Health in Nigeria of a total number of 1616 cases of [cholera](#) and 126 deaths. Kano State reported 1316 cases and 76 deaths (case fatality rate, 5.8%) from 15 October to 23 November 2004 and Edo State reported 300 cases and 50 deaths (case fatality rate 16.7%) from 16 September to 18 November 2004. In both states, *Vibrio cholera* has been laboratory confirmed. In Kano State, 20 local government areas have been affected with the case fatality rate highest among those less than 2 years of age and over 60 years of age. While there are widespread water shortages in metropolitan local government areas, many of the water sources that do exist are not safe. [View Article](#)

Possible Bird Flu in France

2 December - News 24.com reported that a 69-year-old Frenchman has been hospitalized in the eastern French city of Nancy after possibly coming down with [bird flu](#). The man, who was not identified, recently traveled in Asia, where the bird flu virus has forced the culling of more than 100 million birds and killed 32 people in Thailand and Vietnam this year. The patient was admitted to the Nancy hospital after being transferred from a less well-equipped hospital in the town of Bar-le-Duc. [View Article](#)

Russia: New Cases of Trichinellosis in Novosibirsk

7 December - A family of hunters residing in the Chistoozernaya district of the Novosibirsk region has been affected by [trichinellosis](#). Two family members were admitted to hospital in serious condition. Only 11 cases were registered in Novosibirsk during 2003, while 5 times as many cases have already been registered in 2004. Health officials are recommending that the public beware of meat that has not passed veterinary inspection. [View Article](#)

Vomiting Bug Crisis ‘Worsening’

4 December – The Irish Examiner reported that the outbreak of the [Winter Vomiting Bug](#) at St. Vincent’s Hospital in Dublin was described as a “worsening crisis” yesterday after another 22 members of staff fell ill with the virus. Approximately 95 patients and 65 staff have the bug. A further 45 patients are showing symptoms of the virus, while 14 wards at the hospital remain closed to new admissions because of the outbreak. The number of new cases of the virus is increasing pressure on hospital services at a time when staff numbers are depleted. [View Article](#) (registration required)

USNORTHCOM

Botulism Confirmed in Three Cases Linked to Florida Clinic

7 December - CIDRAP News reported that [botulism](#) toxin type A has been confirmed in three of four suspected cases linked with a Florida clinic that reportedly gave injections with anti-wrinkle preparations containing botulinum toxin, but whether the cases stemmed from such injections remained unknown. The Florida Department of Health (FDH) said, "Only the toxin, not Clostridium botulinum bacteria, has been identified in these patients. Pretreatment specimens were unavailable

for testing for one individual." The FDH statement said, "The source of the botulism toxin type A in these individuals remains under investigation." The FDH statement indicated that the four patients, who were on mechanical ventilators last week, remained seriously ill today. "The severity of illness noted in the affected individuals continues to significantly challenge their ability to fully participate in a detailed investigation of possible causes of their illness," the statement said. [View Article](#)

FDA Bolsters Food-Tracking Measures

7 December – The Boston Globe reported that new rules announced yesterday will make it easier to investigate a bioterror attack on the US [food supply](#), though they won't change the underlying problem: the vulnerability of the nation's food. The regulations announced yesterday by the Food and Drug Administration aim to trace the source of food contamination after the fact. Most businesses involved in the nation's human and animal food supply will have to keep records showing where they received food and where they shipped it. The idea is to help investigators figure out where in a long chain a particular item may have been tainted. [View Article](#)

Flu Season Off to Slower Start, CDC Chief Says

6 December – Reuters reported that this year's [flu](#) season has started slowly in the U.S. according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. None of the 50 states or Washington, D.C., reported widespread influenza activity between Nov. 21 and 27, the latest period for which full data was available, according to CDC Director Dr. Julie Gerberding. Most only saw sporadic outbreaks of the potentially deadly virus. "The flu is getting off to a slower start this year than last year," Gerberding said. But she added that it was still too early to say whether the U.S. was poised for a relatively easy flu season. "We can't be confident that we're not going to see more flu by the end of the season," Gerberding said. Influenza kills about 36,000 Americans and hospitalizes 200,000 each year. Exact figures on flu-related deaths are difficult to come by because U.S. doctors are not required to report such deaths. [View Article](#)

HHS Chief Cites Pandemic Flu, Food Tampering As Top Concerns

3 December - CIDRAP News reported that in announcing his resignation today after 4 years as US Health and Human services (HHS) secretary, Tommy G. Thompson cited [pandemic influenza](#) and [food biosecurity](#) as two of his biggest worries. Thompson, who presided over massive increases in federal spending for public health preparedness and biodefense research, cited the widespread concern that H5N1 avian influenza could trigger a human flu pandemic. Noting that the virus has sickened about 40 people in Asia and killed 30 of them, he said, "That is huge lethality. No other disease has had that kind of lethality before." He said he wants to push the development of cell-culture technology for producing flu vaccines. Thompson said his second big concern is that terrorists will strike the food supply. "I cannot understand for the life of me why the terrorists have not attacked our food supply, because it's so easy to do, and we're importing a lot of food from the Middle East and it'd be easy to tamper with that," he said. [View Article](#)

ID Biomedical Gets U.S. Flu Drug Deal

6 December – Reuters reported that ID Biomedical Corp. signed a 10-year U.S. distribution deal for its Fluviral drug that could reap sales of \$2.3 billion and help U.S. authorities fill a [flu vaccine](#) shortage. The deal, subject to approval by U.S. regulators, would transform Vancouver-based ID Biomedical from a small-scale operator with revenues of C\$22 million in the first nine months of this year to a major player in a crucial market. "This commits these companies to basically buying all of ID Biomedical's supply," said Taunya Sell, analyst at Ragen MacKenzie. The long-term agreement with

ID Biomedical suggests distributors do not expect prices for flu vaccine to erode, she said. "It is the expectation of the parties that ID Biomedical's Fluviral will be licensed in the U.S. by at least the 2007-08 influenza season, meaning the vaccine production and purchase transaction will cover a total of at least eight influenza seasons," the company said in a statement. [View Article](#)

Minnesota Woman Offers Flu Shots on Campus, Then Flees

7 December – The Star Tribune Reported that police were looking for a woman who gave [flu shots](#) at Augsburg College and then fled when asked for information about her credentials. The school said a woman sold shots on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at the school's Christensen Center. She claimed to be with the American Heart Association, but when asked for more information, she left campus. The American Heart Association told the school the woman was not affiliated with the organization. No one had reported ill effects from the shots. People who reported getting a shot from the woman were being monitored by Hennepin County health officials, Schultz said. He said as many as 16 people may have received shots. [View Article](#) (registration required)

Pedicure Infections Outbreak Larger Than Previously Thought

2 December – The Mercury News reported that for some pedicure patrons, the infected sores on their legs point to an outbreak of serious pedicure-related skin infections in Santa Clara County, CA that is broader, more complex and started earlier than previously believed. Health officials said they knew of about 30 such infections. But patients and doctors reported dozens of previously unknown cases. The suspected culprit in the infections is a microbe called [non-tuberculous mycobacterium](#). The bacteria is commonly found in low levels in water supplies. Under the right conditions, the microbe can breed and more easily infect the skin -- and footbaths in some pedicure salons have proved to be a place where it thrives. [View Article](#) (registration required)

U.S. to Import 4 Million Flu Shot Doses

7 December – Reuters reported that U.S. health officials, taking another step to ease the season's [flu shot](#) shortage, approved the importation of up to 4 million flu shot doses from Europe. The government will immediately buy 1.2 million doses made by GlaxoSmithKline Plc at a plant in Germany and distribute them to needy areas, Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson said. Another 2.8 million doses from the company are available for later in the flu season. Because the vaccine, called Fluarix, is still considered experimental in the United States, patients will have to sign a form stating they know the vaccine may pose risks. [View Article](#)

Whooping Cough Outbreak

6 December – KAKE.com reported that dozens of people in Kingman County have [whooping cough](#). Now officials are trying to make sure it does not spread. State health department officials say 35 of this year's 82 confirmed whooping cough cases have come from Kingman County. Officials have cancelled all indoor community activities to keep the disease from spreading. Whooping cough starts with a fever and soon turns into a constant cough that makes inhaling air difficult. It can be treated with antibiotics. [View Article](#)

USPACOM

China SARS Vaccine Passes First Hurdle - State Media

5 December – Reuters reported that Chinese researchers have developed a [SARS](#) vaccine that has passed the first stage of human trials raising hopes for prevention of a virus that has killed some 800 people since it emerged in 2002. Antibodies against Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome developed in 24 of 36 volunteers in the trial though several more clinical trials were required before the vaccine would be ready for commercial use. "We have finished our first-phase clinical test in line with international vaccine-testing requirements," said the director of the research team, Yin Weidong.

[View Article](#)

Food Poisoning in Hong Kong Affects 102 People

2 December – Pacific Disaster Management Information Network reported that people are falling ill after eating at a Mong Kok noodle shop in Hong Kong. So far the total number of affected people is 102. The 41 men and 61 women, aged 15 to 73, developed fever and diarrhea, abdominal pain and vomiting up to 37 hours after dining at the shop between 20 and 28 November 2004. Sixty-six people sought treatment from private doctors and public hospitals. Two were admitted to a private hospital and were discharged. The Center for Health Protection in Hong Kong said the outbreak was related to bacterial [food poisoning](#). Further investigations are underway. [View Article](#)

Philippines Starts Massive Clean-Up after Storms

7 December – Reuters reported that soldiers manned bulldozers and residents pitched in with shovels and rakes as Philippine authorities cleared mud, logs and debris from flood-hit towns where hundreds have died. Disaster officials said 657 people were killed and 718 were missing after two weeks of storms caused floods and landslides across a swathe of the northern Philippines. The military said relief operations had been slowed by local politics with survivors accusing some officials of distributing food, drinking water and clothes to their supporters first. Clean water is in short supply and fears of disease are running high. Logging has again been blamed for exacerbating damage from a natural disaster. President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo said at the weekend she was canceling all permits to cut and haul trees. [View Article](#)

University of Hawaii Faculty Member Contracts Leptospirosis

1 December –The Pacific Disaster Management Information Network reported that a University of Hawaii faculty member has been diagnosed with [leptospirosis](#), a disease contracted via contaminated water and mud. The faculty member was one of many volunteers who helped the University dig out of the severe flooding conditions that happened over the Halloween weekend. He spent 3 days wading in the water in a pair of thongs which made blisters on his feet and became ill one week later. Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease that affects humans and animals. It is caused by bacteria of the genus *Leptospira* and can enter flood and stream water via animal urine and enter the body through a cut or abrasion. [View Article](#)

USSOUTHCOM

Direct Payments in Poor Countries May Improve Maternal and Child Health

3 December – Medical News Today reported that a study from Honduras showed how direct cash payments from government to poor families improve the take-up of antenatal and infant health services. Scaling-up preventive interventions in [child and maternal health](#) is often restricted in developing countries by a lack of demand for health services. In Latin America, some governments have been trying to increase demand for health interventions by making direct payments to poor households contingent on them keeping up-to-date with preventive health services. The household-level intervention had a large impact (15-20% increase) in coverage of antenatal care and well-child check-ups. Childhood immunization series could therefore be started more opportunistically, and the coverage of growth monitoring was markedly increased. [View Article](#)

Malaria Cases Rise in Dominican Republic

6 December – Yahoo! News reported that [malaria](#) cases have increased 31 percent over the past year in the Dominican Republic, possibly because of heavy rainfall during Hurricane Jeanne. A handful of foreign tourists have reported contracting the illness after visiting the Caribbean nation. Dominican authorities said they were increasing fumigation campaigns in the east to kill mosquitoes and planned to temporarily place doctors in major hotels so they can test tourists who come down with a fever, the most common symptom. Since January, 2,021 people have been diagnosed with malaria in the Dominican Republic compared to 1,529 in 2003. [View Article](#)

Please contact us to comment on or suggest improvements to this report.

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